



# Surry County, Virginia

## Tourism Assessment Report

September 2013

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	3
DRIVE Tourism – Virginia’s State Tourism Report .....	4-5
Acknowledgements .....	6
Surry County Background .....	7-8
Past Surry County Tourism Programs .....	8
Surry County Tourism Economic Impact .....	9
“What Do We Want To Accomplish?” .....	10
Mission Statement .....	11-12
Vision Statement .....	12-13
Situation Analyses .....	14-19
Premier Tourism Assets .....	14-15
Surry County Strengths .....	16
Surry County Weaknesses .....	16
Surry County Opportunities .....	17
Surry County Threats .....	17
Target Customers .....	18
Local Visitor Data Sources .....	18
Current Marketing .....	19
Rankings and Priorities .....	19
Step One and Objectives .....	21-23
Step Two and Objectives .....	24-26
Step Three and Objectives .....	27-28
Next Steps .....	29
Appendix .....	30-31



## **Executive Summary**

In February 2013, the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) was approached by representatives of Surry County, Virginia regarding assistance with assessing the tourism potential and steps to capitalize on this potential. Steve Galyean, VTC Director of Development, and Stephanie Slocum, VTC Tourism Development Specialist, met with Surry County representatives to scope out the next steps in the process.

Surry County officials identified a core group of Surry County residents who were key stakeholders in the tourism economy of Surry County. A series of three evening workshops, facilitated by Steve Galyean and Stephanie Slocum, were held at the Surry

County Government Offices on June 18, 19, 20, 2013. A dedicated group of over twenty Surry County stakeholders participated in the development of this document, the Surry County Tourism Assessment Report.

The facilitators led the stakeholder group through a planning exercise which identified components of a mission and vision statement; a current situation analysis; an analysis of Surry County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; a ranking of identified needs and desire; and finally the establishment of goals and action items.

The group identified three goals, along with objectives for each goal, to move the tourism efforts forward in Surry County, VA. These goals are:

- 1. Establish a formal, county-approved Surry County, VA tourism and economic development group**
- 2. Develop infrastructure for tourism**
- 3. Define Surry County's brand, while being authentic to the community, the culture, and the people**

These goals are the first step. It is recommended that these goals become the foundation for future efforts to build upon the considerable tourism assets in Surry County, VA.



## **DRIVE Tourism – Virginia’s Statewide Tourism Plan**

Throughout this document you will see the **DRIVE Tourism** logo and call out boxes that reference the Virginia State Tourism Report. These call outs will support and further explain how the Surry County, Virginia tourism efforts integrate with the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan. The complete Virginia Statewide Tourism Report can be found at [www.vatc.org/STP](http://www.vatc.org/STP). Surry County, VA is part of the Hampton Roads/Coastal Virginia region in the Virginia State Tourism Plan.

### **What is the Virginia State Tourism Plan?**

A result of Governor McDonnell’s Economic Development and Job Creation Commission, the Virginia State Tourism Plan (STP) is a **blueprint** on how to make Virginia more **competitive** over the next five years in generating additional tourists **through focused product development** attractive to traveling parties.

More than **1,300 Virginia tourism industry stakeholders** spent a year providing PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) with directional ideas and suggestions about how to best grow Virginia’s tourism industry. PwC analyzed this input with **research on Virginia visitors and prospective visitors, overall consumer travel trends, economic trends, and other research including a competitive analysis** of surrounding and competing destinations.

The Plan is comprised of three parts – a **Statewide Section** highlighting overall recommendations and priorities as well as a **Regional Section** that dives into Virginia’s existing nine tourism regions and provides primary and secondary areas of focus for each region as well as suggested measures of success. It is best to first read the Statewide plan and then the Regional plans. There is also an **Appendix Section** that contains information about travel and tourism, along with best practice case studies.

### **The Plan’s Tenets of Belief**

There are **three core components** of this Plan that unite the recommendations and related actions and priorities. Everything in the Plan is rooted in these three principles.

- **Authenticity:** Maintain character and personality and create new development in a sustainable manner.
- **Connectivity:** Develop clusters of new experiences (attractions) which complement and leverage current assets and enable "hub and spoke" experiences. This regional approach will allow Virginia to be more competitive in attracting and gaining visitors.
- **Visitor Experience:** Focus on the complete visitor experience by developing diverse product offerings in an effort to extend traditional visitor seasons. Leverage current strong assets of the Commonwealth, including cities and towns, history, nature and outdoor recreation, music and the arts, culinary, sports, group business, events, industry base, and commercial assets.



### **Five Focus Areas of the Plan**

The Virginia State Tourism Plan is built around **five major outcomes, or categories**. These outcomes apply to both regional and state level initiatives and include:

<b>1. Product Development</b>
Attractions stay relevant to the changes of activities and desires of today's travelers. Product development must be able to exceed expectations of today's domestic and international high-value visitors.
<b>2. Pillars (Infrastructure)</b>
Virginia's transportation infrastructure supports a quality visitor journey in all aspects of the travel throughout the Commonwealth.
<b>3. Partnerships</b>
Cooperation among various stakeholders is conducted on a regional basis to develop multi-level itineraries that will position Virginia as an attractive alternative for leisure and business trips.
<b>4. Promotions</b>
Internal communications will convert high-yield ambassadors for the importance of tourism in building diverse economies for Virginia's regions.
External communications should focus on building brand relevancy to targeted out-of-state markets that produce the highest return on investment.
<b>5. Policies</b>
State and local governments will put into place policies that will build investment into communities through tourism development while also improving the quality of life for its residents.

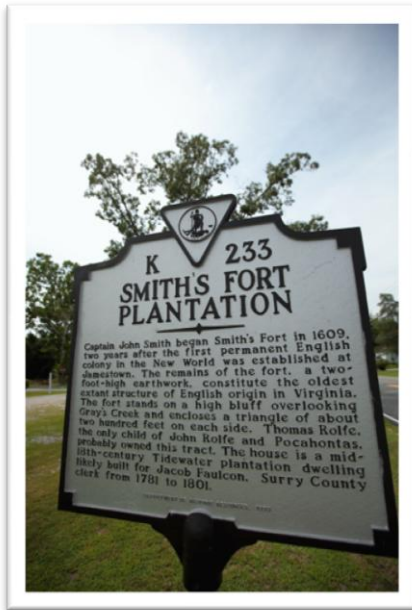
Over the next several months, the Virginia Tourism Corporation will be conducting community workshops, called DRIVE Tourism, which will help educate Virginia's travel industry partners about the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan, and begin implementation of the recommendations and findings in the Plan.



## **Acknowledgements**

This Report is the result of in-depth discussions by the following Surry County stakeholders. These stakeholders represent business owners, non-profits, attractions, restaurants, industry, local government, state parks, and others who are all interested in the development and promotion of tourism in Surry County as part of an overall economic development strategy to benefit the citizens through increased revenue, job creation, and quality of life.

- Michael Abley
  - Opening Doors to Government, Business, & Growth
- Allard Allston III
  - Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia
- Chief Lynette Allston
  - Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia
- Todd Ballance and Andrea Williams
  - Preservation Virginia/Bacon's Castle
- Pat Bernshausen
  - Surry County Administrative Office
- Donna Edwards
  - Edwards Ham Company
- Tyrone Franklin
  - Surry County Administrator
- Anna Hansen
  - Surry Side Realty
- Honorable Brigid Jones
  - Cabin Point Mercantile and Claremont Town Council
- Honorable Harold Jones
  - Surry County Chamber of Commerce
- Joseph Jenkins
  - Surry County African American Heritage Society
- Honorable Judy Lyttle
  - Surry County Board of Supervisors
- Louis Malon
  - Preservation Virginia
- Claude Reeson
  - C. W. Reeson Nursery
- Nancy Rodrigues
  - Surry County
- Greg Schaale
  - Greg Schaale Design/Surry County Chamber of Commerce
- Rich Sheldon
  - Hampton Roads Winery & Vineyard
- Catherine Correll Walls
  - Virginia Home and Land Co. Realtors
- Carol Wiedel
  - Preservation Virginia/Bacon's Castle
- Jason Wiedel
  - Surry County Chamber of Commerce/Habitat for Humanity
- Ranger Nathan Younger
  - Chippokes Plantation State Park



## **BACKGROUND**

Surry County traces its history back to the earliest days of the British settlement of North America. But long before the first English settlers sailed up the James in 1607, the county was home to Native Americans. In 1607 those early Jamestown explorers landed first beside a high bluff on the south side of what is today the James River, near the present town of Claremont. These settlers decided to build their first fort on a marshy peninsula, later known as Jamestown Island. Early settlements in Surry were part of the Corporation of Jamestown. By 1609, Smith's Fort was built on a high bluff on Gray's Creek, and Hog Island had settlers, hogs, and a fort.

Surry separated from James County in 1652. At the time it was a large county extending to the North Carolina border. As the colony flourished, the region developed great plantations, along with small family farms.

Following the American Revolutionary War, Surry County became part of the new Commonwealth of Virginia. During the American Civil War, the Confederate Army had units called the Surry Cavalry and the Surry Light Artillery.

In over 350 years of existence, the County of Surry has taken care to guard its history and its rural nature. The County is home to several picturesque small towns, historic homes and churches, and Chippokes Plantation State Park. It is connected to Virginia's Historic Triangle (Jamestown, Williamsburg and Yorktown) by the Jamestown/Scotland Ferry.

Surry is home to several century-old places of historic note, including:

**Smith's Fort Plantation**, built between 1751 and 1765, which stands on land given as a Dower tract by Powhatan to John Rolfe upon the occasion of his marriage to Pocahontas.

**Bacon's Castle** which was built in 1665 is the oldest documented brick house in English North America.

**Chippokes Plantation State Park**, which is home to one of the oldest working farms in the United States. Attractions include the Jones-Stewart Mansion, the Farm and Forestry Museum, a visitor center, swimming complex, camping area, picnic areas, formal English gardens, and biking and hiking trails.

In addition to the public attractions, 16 privately occupied structures in Surry are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Dominion Power has operated the Surry Nuclear Power Station in Surry County since 1972 and is one of the County's largest employers. Visitors to the County are encouraged to tour the [Surry Nuclear Information Center](#) to learn more about electrical generation and see how a nuclear power station works.

Today's Surry County provides a montage of rolling farmlands, blossoming woods, water-front panoramas and quaint lifestyles. For history lovers, Surry is a wealth of stately old homes and plantations. For adventurers, there are footpaths through the woods, boating, off-road trails, hunting and fishing. For active recreation there are scenic picnic areas, a swimming pool and a beach at Chippokes State Park. The Surry County Department of Parks and Recreation offers a wide variety of activities including youth sports and an active seniors program. For food lovers, Surry serves up the epitome of Southern cuisine, world famous smoke cured hams and home-grown peanuts. From the delightful ferry ride across the James River to the warmth and hospitality of the folks in Surry County, you are in for a unique and very memorable experience.

The Surry County of today looks back with pride and cherishes its history and rural nature; but at the same time the county is excited to offer opportunities for economic development and business growth.

## **Past Surry County Tourism Programs**

The Surry County Tourism Bureau was incorporated in March 1995. The Bureau purpose was to educate the citizens as to the importance of tourism from an economic development and quality of life perspective; to encourage the establishment and expansion of retail and other business opportunities that service the needs of visitors; to encourage the establishment and expansion of the County's visitor attractions, and to establish a marketing program for Surry County.

Since 1995, the Surry County Tourism Bureau completed a number of successful projects. Among these were the development of brochures, cooperative marketing initiatives, establishment of a tourism website, visitor inquiry fulfillment, the opening of the Surry Welcome Center, and other promotional efforts to market to potential visitors to Surry County.

However, due to decreasing funding availability, lack of a dedicated staff resource, and changes in the tourism economy and industry, it was decided by the Surry County Tourism Bureau that the organization would dissolve at the end of 2012. Records from meetings of the Surry County Tourism Bureau are now housed at the Surry County, Virginia Historical Society and Museums, Inc.



## Tourism's Economic Impact in Surry County, VA

Tourism contributes considerable revenue and jobs to Surry County, VA. In 2011, the Virginia Tourism Corporation reports over \$9.4 million in travel expenditures in Surry County. These expenditures generated over \$270,000 in local tax receipts, and over \$380,000 in state tax receipts. More importantly, tourism supports 99 jobs in Surry County with an annual payroll of over \$2 million.

*Virginia is for Lovers* 

### **Surry**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Percent Change
<b>Population</b>	7,057	7,096	7,088	7,052	6,946	(1.50) %

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Percent Change
<b>Travel Economic Impacts</b>						
Employment	97	96	101	99	99	0.17%
Expenditures	\$ 8,329,704	\$ 8,513,307	\$ 8,480,152	\$ 8,916,948	\$ 9,468,736	6.19%
Local Tax Receipts	\$ 253,450	\$ 261,493	\$ 263,449	\$ 270,191	\$ 273,526	1.23%
Payroll	\$ 1,882,536	\$ 1,916,696	\$ 2,019,382	\$ 2,057,643	\$ 2,086,591	1.41%
State Tax Receipts	\$ 348,601	\$ 347,715	\$ 370,137	\$ 377,609	\$ 382,782	1.37%
<b>Local Excise Tax Rates</b>						
Admissions Excise Tax Rate	0 %	0 %	10 %	0 %	0 %	n/a
Food Service Excise Tax Rate	0 %	0 %	3 %	0 %	0 %	n/a
Lodging Excise Tax Rate	0 %	0 %	3 %	0 %	0 %	n/a
<b>Local Excise Tax Collection</b>						
Admissions Excise Tax Collected	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	n/a
Food Service Excise Tax Collected	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	n/a
Lodging Excise Tax Collected	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	n/a
<b>Notes:</b>						
Food Service Excise Tax Rate -- The County of Surry does not impose excise taxation of food service and lodging; however, the Town of Surry imposes an excise taxation of food service (3%) and lodging (3%). The town is not required to report the collections to the Auditor of Public Accounts.						

Source: <http://virginiascan.yesvirginia.org/localspending/localspending.aspx>

## **“What Do We Want To Accomplish?”**

At the beginning of the Surry County Tourism Assessment, the facilitators asked the participants “What do you hope to accomplish as a result of the Surry County Tourism Assessment process?” Below is a summary of their responses:

- Strengthen partnerships and cross partnerships
- Identify resources in Surry County, e.g., what is special
- Build partnerships to keep visitors in Surry County, e.g., Chippokes Plantation State Park
- Have people be warm and fuzzy about Surry County
- Learn/know local history
- Realize that good things happen here
- Continue to grow attendance at Pow Wow by bringing people to the County from across the region
- Bring all locals together to have conversations
- With so much potential, interest people in coming, seeing, and learning
- Continue relationships among people at the table
- Continue partnerships to bring in tourists and increase business to businesses and non-profits
- First opportunity to network with all major County tourism players
- Pool resources to better execute projects
- Understand how to better increase County tourism
- Increase County support of businesses
- Pay serious attention to transportation infrastructure to get tourists here
- Inform people of options to get to Surry County
- Tourists need a safe way to get here
- Get tourists to Surry County
- Economic development and growth, working closely with youth and non-profits
- Keep young people here
- Tourism is key to growth and development
- Interested in tourism growth and economic development
- Enhance profits to help produce more funds to operate Surry County
- All work together
- Foster environment that people want to come to
- Share precious assets have here
- Help youth find jobs and stay in Surry County
- Want other people to see in Surry County what brought her to live and stay in County
- Want people to stop and visit instead of passing through on way to Williamsburg and Virginia Beach
- Realize what we can do to look like a destination with many things to see and do



## **Mission Statement**

A mission statement defines what an organization or an effort is all about. It answers the question of why the organization exists, or why an endeavor needs to take place. It should address the key questions of who, why, for whom, and how.

Perhaps most importantly a good mission statement gives guidance to the organization, helping to filter out the important from the less important....or irrelevant. Simply put, the mission statement should communicate the desired direction for the organization or endeavor.

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group agreed to not craft a complete Mission Statement during the Tourism Assessment process, preferring to conduct a more in-depth statement development process once input is received from the Board of Supervisors on the Report. However, the participants did identify several “guiding principles” that are important to Surry County. It is suggested that the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group build upon these “Guiding Principles” and craft a mission statement for their endeavors.

Below are the “Guiding Principles” the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group identified:

- Promote
- Preserve
- Partnerships
- Money....increase
- Guided Growth
- Awareness
- Enhancement
- Interest in Surry County
- Legacy
- Synergy/Unity
- Collective Community Pride
- Positive Impression
- Referrals/Networking
- Cultural Distinction
- Create Improved Image that is Unique, Measurable, and Pleasurable
- Ancestral/History
- Improve ferry information on Surry County
- Improve first impressions
- Commitment
- Authenticity
- Honor Roots/Heritage
- Educate internally and externally what Surry County offers
- Free/Available
- Hospitality/Welcoming

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group agreed that the Guiding Principles fell into five broad categories (Partnerships; Marketing; Preservation; Economic; and Community) as shown below:

<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	<b>MARKETING</b>	<b>PRESERVATION</b>	<b>ECONOMIC</b>	<b>COMMUNITY</b>
<b>Synergy</b>	<b>Promote</b>	<b>Preserve</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Awareness</b>
<b>Unity</b>	<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Legacy</b>	<b>Enhancements</b>	<b>Legacy</b>
<b>Referrals/Networking</b>	<b>Interest in Surry County</b>	<b>Cultural Distinction</b>	<b>Investment</b>	<b>Community Pride</b>
<b>Citizen Involvement</b>	<b>Positive Impression</b>	<b>Ancestral</b>	<b>Hospitality/ Welcoming</b>	<b>Cultural Distinction</b>
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Create improved image</b>	<b>Authenticity</b>		<b>Ancestral</b>
	<b>Improve first impressions</b>	<b>Honor roots/Heritage</b>		<b>Improve first impressions</b>
	<b>Educate visitors</b>	<b>Guided Growth</b>		<b>Honor roots/Heritage</b>
	<b>Free/Available</b>			<b>Educate Citizens</b>
	<b>Hospitality and Welcoming</b>			<b>Hospitality and Welcoming</b>

Again, it is suggested that the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group work to craft a Mission Statement from the Guiding Principles identified above to assist in moving the Group forward, and providing direction in future efforts.

## **Vision Statement**

A Vision Statement provides an organization with aspirational direction; in other words, where the organization would like to go within a defined time period. The Vision Statement ties back into the Mission Statement in that the Mission Statement provides the definitions and parameters that an organization should follow in reaching their vision.

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group agreed to not craft a complete Vision Statement during the Tourism Assessment process, preferring to conduct a more in-depth statement development process once input is received from the Board of Supervisors on the Report. However, the participants did identify several “Directions” that are important to Surry County. It is suggested that the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group build upon these “Directions” and craft a Vision Statement for their endeavors.

Below are the key “Directions” that the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group identified for Surry County in the next five years:

- 25% increase in visitation to Surry County from Greater Williamsburg area
- Surry County is a destination
- Known as a center for agri-innovation
- Public/Private Visitor Center with knowledgeable staff
- Enhanced infrastructure including internet, lodging, restaurants, retail
- Be the Spoke in a “Hub & Spoke Experience”
- More accessibility for visitation with increased access from new Route 460 with multiple exits
- Increased water recreation
- Outdoor shuttle and transportation
- Strong partnerships and packages promoting all
- Coordinated efforts with local events and events that come through Surry County (Nickel/Dime Tour; bicycle events, etc.)
- Increase economic benefits: increased revenue; jobs; quality of life
- Youth retention
- Unique branding with focus on cultural, historic, and authenticity
- Clarify identity and communicate

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group agreed that the “Directions” fell into four broad categories (Positioning; Marketing; Economic; Infrastructure) as shown below:

<b>POSITIONING</b>	<b>MARKETING</b>	<b>ECONOMIC</b>	<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>
Surry is a destination	Public/Private Visitor Center with Knowledgeable Staff	25% increase from Williamsburg	Enhanced internet; lodging; restaurants; retail
Center of Agritourism/ Agri-innovation	Coordinated local events and efforts	Increased Revenue	More accessibility for visitors
Hub of Hub and Spoke	Coordinated outside events and efforts	More Jobs	Water recreation and outdoor services
Unique Branding	Strong partnerships and packages promoting all	Support existing and encourage new business	
Clarify identity and communicate		Improve quality of life	
		Retain youth in Surry	



Again, it is suggested that the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group work to craft a Vision Statement from the Directions identified above to assist in moving the Group forward, and providing direction in future efforts.

## **Situation Analysis**

As part of the Surry County Tourism Assessment exercises, The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group participated in a situational analysis of area tourism to help determine the goals and objectives. This analysis included the review of tourism assets, target customers, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

## **Situation Analysis – Premier Tourism Assets**

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group identified the following premier assets in Surry County. These are the assets which are most likely to be of appeal to visitors to Surry County, and to be featured in advertising and promotions.

- African American Family Reunion
- Bacon's Castle
- Blueberry Jam Festival
- Camp Chanco
- Chippokes Plantation State Park
- Claremont
- College Run Farms
- C. W. Reeson Nursery
- Dendron Historical Society & Museum
- Drewry Farm
- Eastover Retreat Center
- Edward's Ham
- Endless Farms Alpacas
- Genealogical records
- Hog Island



The Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan's Hampton Roads/Coastal Virginia Regional Section identifies the following Regional Lures and Strengths. Those lures which are applicable for Surry County are indicated in red.

### **Highlights of Coastal Virginia Regional Lures/Strengths:**

- Colonial, Civil War, Maritime, Military history
- Historic Triangle (Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown)
- Notable Cities & Towns: Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, Smithfield, Suffolk
- The Beach
- State Parks: 4 (Chippokes)
- Interstate connectivity and airports
- Convention Centers: Hampton Roads Convention Center, Virginia Beach Convention Center
- Military presence
- Viewed as a family-friendly, value destination

- James River
- Jamestown-Scotland Ferry
- Lawne's Creek Church
- Manor House at Smith's Fort
- Nottoway Indian Pow Wow
- Pork, Peanut, and Pine Festival
- Road Side Markers
- Rolfe House/Smith's Fort Plantation
- Slades Raceway/Motorcycle Racing
- Surry Courthouse
- Surry County Historical Society & Museum
- Surry Power Station
- Surry Recreation Center - Soccer
- Taste of Surry

In addition to the specific Surry attractions listed above the Group identified the following activities and additional attributes that are important to Surry County.

- Boating
- Bird Watching
- Camping
- Canoeing
- Central location
- Fishing
- Geocaching
- Horseback Riding
- Swimming



## **Situation Analysis – SWOT**

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group conducted a SWOT analysis to further assist in the development of this tourism assessment. A SWOT analysis focuses on Strengths (S); Weaknesses (W); Opportunities (O); and Threats (T). Strengths and weaknesses are primarily internal factors, whereas opportunities and threats are generally external factors.

### **Surry County Strengths**

- Historical significance
- Location
- Relaxed ambiance
- Scenic
- Unique entryways
- Jamestown- Scotland Ferry
- Natural resources (water, land)
- People with passion
- Agriculture and specifically multi-generational farms
- Food
- Sense of Community

### **Surry County Weaknesses**

- Downtowns
- Lack of Welcome Center/insufficient tourism information
- Collective brand is lacking or missing
- Limited or no tourism funding
- Limited open hours for facilities
- Limited lodging
- Limited river access



The Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan's Hampton Roads/Coastal Virginia Regional Section identifies the following Regional Challenges that may affect the region's tourism economy. Those challenges which are applicable for Surry County are indicated in red.

#### **Coastal Virginia Regional Challenges:**

- Traffic congestion
- Somewhat limited attraction connectivity and perceived distance of regional destinations
- Differentiation from competition in nearby, coastal destinations
- Attendance issues related to historical experiences
- Coastal seasonality
- Image/perception issue to overcome

- Limited motorcoach services
- Route 10, byways, and secondary road conditions (VDOT service district and location)
- Weak hospitality and customer service quality
- Lack of service businesses
- Under-reported tourism visitation (local lodging)
- Weak restaurant quality

## **Surry County Opportunities**

- Partnerships with schools and vocational tech, including higher education, for hospitality, sales, and, marketing training
- Entrepreneur shadowing for students
- Develop the Surry brand; Surry sets that brand
- Improve messages and policies for prospective businesses
- Identify a unifying force
- Communicate the Surry County quality of life

## **Surry County Threats**

- Apathy and lack of commitment
- Change
- Williamsburg and competition
- James River Plantations as competitors
- Lack of local cooperation
- Limited financial and human resources
- Road conditions and lack of timely maintenance
- Lack of, or poorly perceived, reputation
- No tourism bureau





## **Situation Analysis – Target Customers**

- Demographic desired: Middle class families with money
- International
- Interested in historical education
- Eco-tourists/agri-tourists
- Volun-tourists
- Foodies
- Festival/event attendees
- African-Americans
- Genealogists
- Wine/Vineyard tourists
- Outdoor enthusiasts
- Latino market
- Visitors already on Surry County side of James River



## **Situation Analysis – Local Visitor Data**

Surry County does not currently have dedicated tourism office, or a visitor center. However, the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group did identify the following sources for visitor data. This data will be very important as Surry County moves forward with marketing initiatives as well as grant applications.

### **Current Surry County sources for visitor data**

- Surry County Historical Society
- Surry Nuclear Power Plant Visitor Center
- Edwards Ham Company
- Bacon's Castle
- Smith's Fort
- Chippokes Plantation State Park
- Nottoway Pow Wow



## **Situation Analysis – Marketing**

Since 1995, the Surry County Tourism Bureau completed a number of successful projects. Among these were the development of brochures, cooperative marketing initiatives, establishment of a tourism website, visitor inquiry fulfillment, the opening of the Surry Welcome Center, and other promotional efforts to market to potential visitors to Surry County.

Currently, Surry County produces a visitor brochure that is distributed at sites around and adjacent to Surry County. The County also maintains a website that contains both resident and visitor information. The website can be found at <http://www.surrycountyva.gov>.

## **Ranking and Priorities**

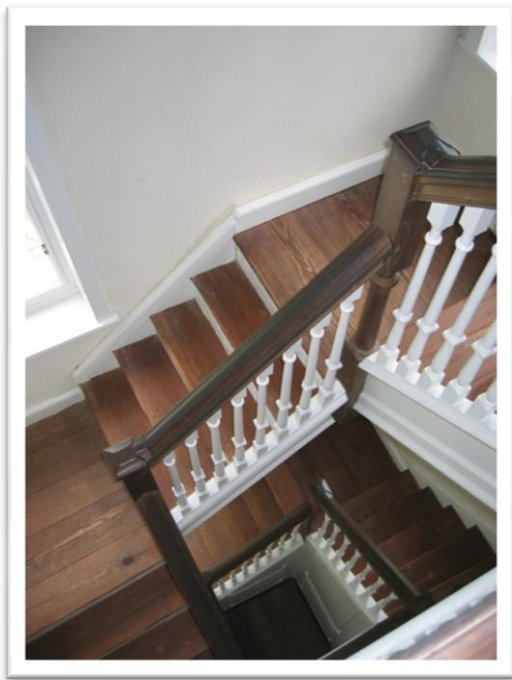
The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group identified sixteen areas that they deemed important to move tourism forward in Surry County. The participants then ranked those items in importance, starting with the most pressing or important aspect. These priorities were then used in developing the Goals and Objectives.

Due to time constraints, the top 3 items were discussed during the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group planning sessions. It is recommended that as the Group moves forward, additional goals, objectives and action items are developed and implemented to address the other priorities that the Group identified.

### **Rank**   **Item**

- 1   Responsible group for tourism and economic development**
- 2   Develop infrastructure for tourism**
- 3   Define Surry's brand while being authentic to the community**
- 4   Develop river access
- 5   Establish a visitors center
- 6   Develop a marketing plan
- 7   Develop Surry's brand based upon agriculture and multi-cultural aspects of Surry County
- 8   Identify funding and resources
- 9   Develop partnerships

- 10 Promote a pro-business strategy
- 11 Strengthen county/local business relations
- 12 Beautification
- 13 Establish a sustainable positive legacy - the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group is the beginning
- 14 Better engage the agricultural community
- 15 Promote food and agriculture to “locavores”
- 16 Promote a pro-tourism strategy including accessibility, hours of operation, and types of businesses



## **Surry County Tourism Supporters Group Steps**

Based upon the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group input, the SWOT analysis, the situational analyses, and the rankings and priorities the Group identified the following three Steps, Objectives, Tactics, and Measures:

<b>Step One</b>		
<b>Establish a formal, County-approved Surry County tourism and economic development group</b>		
	<b>Step One, Objective One</b>	Define the group make up. Determine who is missing from the group and, based upon input for the Surry County Tourism Group, begin developing mission and vision statements to give guidance to the group. Suggest a name for the group. Establish a meeting schedule to include recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.
	<b>Who:</b>	Surry County Tourism Supporters Group
	<b>When:</b>	Begin by September 5, 2013
	<b>Tactics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee expansion to include farming, Historical Society, and youth representatives.</li> <li>• Mission and vision statements to be formulated after Report input from Board of Supervisors.</li> <li>• Recommended Name: Surry County Tourism and Business Development Supporters Group</li> <li>• Meeting schedule for remainder of 2013: monthly</li> </ul>

	<b>Step One, Objective Two</b>	Begin collecting additional demographic data to include in the Tourism Assessment Report, to strengthen the case for the need of a formal Surry County tourism and economic development group.
	<b>Who:</b>	Surry County Tourism Supporters Group; Surry County Staff, VTC
	<b>When:</b>	Ongoing but begun by September 5, 2013
	<b>Tactics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collection of tourism data</li> </ul>
	<b>Step One; Objective Three</b>	Present initial findings of the Tourism Assessment Report to the Surry County Board of Supervisors and make formal request for sanctioning of the tourism group.
	<b>Who:</b>	VTC presents Tourism Assessment Report. Surry County Tourism Supporters Group representative makes formal request to the Board of Supervisors for adoption of Report.
	<b>When:</b>	September 5, 2013
	<b>Tactics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation to and request of Surry County Board of Supervisors</li> </ul>
	<b>Step One; Objective Four</b>	Upon Board of Supervisors' sanctioning of group, develop a plan of work for the group to begin to address additional goals, objectives, and tactics. Acceptance of plan of work and formal establishment of the tourism group to be requested of Board of Supervisors in first quarter of 2014.
	<b>Who:</b>	Surry County Tourism Supporters Group
	<b>When:</b>	Monthly meetings of Tourism group beginning September 2013
	<b>Tactics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of plan of work</li> <li>Request of Board of Supervisors for acceptance of plan of work and formal establishment of tourism group</li> </ul>
<b>Step One Measure</b>	Successful adoption of the Surry County Tourism Assessment Report by the Surry County Board of Supervisors and establishment of formal tourism and economic development group.	



### **How Does Step One tie into the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan – Partnerships?**

The Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan includes recommendations regarding forming tourism partnerships, as shown below. The desire of the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group Step One to form such partnerships for collaborative efforts with local government and tourism industry stakeholders is in alignment with the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan.

#### ***Outcome 3 – Partnerships***

Virginia has strong partnerships among industry stakeholders all working toward authentic experiences with collaboration from governmental, private sector, and industry organizations

#### ***Partnership Objectives***

Partnerships are of critical importance for the industry in order to execute product development, infrastructure, promotions, and policy initiatives. Partnerships not only connect tourism stakeholders, but have the potential to increase connectivity of destinations and attractions. This element is directly within the control of tourism stakeholders to unite and impact change over the next five years.

Objective 1: Organizations to lead tourism initiatives are strengthened or formed

Objective 2: Collaboration among government organizations at the local, state, and federal levels for tourism initiatives is improved

Objective 3: Connectivity among tourism attractions, businesses, and destinations is improved through partnering



<b>Step Two</b>	<b>Develop infrastructure for tourism</b>	
	<b>Step Two, Objective One</b>	Further define and identify the infrastructure needs
	<b>Who:</b>	Surry County Tourism Supporters Group
	<b>When:</b>	By August 15, 2013 and ongoing
	<b>Tactics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of Route 10, byways, and secondary roads</li> <li>• Curb appeal on public roads</li> <li>• Available visitor information and services</li> <li>• Public water access</li> <li>• Digital media</li> <li>• Dynamic tourism County web site</li> <li>• Expanded ferry service for special events and after Labor Day</li> <li>• Bicycle trails</li> <li>• Financial services for tourists, e.g., ATM's</li> </ul>
	<b>Step Two, Objective Two</b>	Recommend short-term solutions where possible to infrastructure needs identified. Example would be establishment of a visitors center at an existing retail venue and/or government facility
<b>Step Two Measure</b>	<b>Who:</b>	Surry County Tourism Supporters Group
	<b>When:</b>	By August 15, 2013 and ongoing
	<b>Tactics:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitor Center in Surry building</li> </ul>
		Comprehensive listing of completed infrastructure needs and potential short and long-term solutions completed by April 2014



### **How does StepTwo tie into the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan – Pillars (Infrastructure)?**

The Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan includes recommendations regarding development of tourism infrastructure, or pillars. The desire of the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group identify infrastructure needs is in alignment with the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan.

#### ***Outcome 2 – Pillars***

The tourism infrastructure of the Commonwealth and supporting elements are improved or developed to enable the success of visitor experiences.

#### ***Pillars (Supporting Elements) Objectives***

Pillars or supporting elements involve transportation infrastructure, wayfinding, workforce training, and research, which serve to support tourism growth and industry success. The objectives for these supporting elements are defined as follows:

Objective 1: Strategies to improve transportation are developed and executed

Objective 2: Visitor wayfinding is improved

Objective 3: Tourism education and training programs are continued and enhanced

Objective 4: Tourism research is available which supports tourism development and marketing initiatives



### **Additional Step Two tie into the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan – Products**

The Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan Product Section addresses the needs of maintaining existing, and developing new tourism products. It is suggested that Surry County focus initially on the Product Themes highlighted in red below:

#### ***Outcome 1 – Products***

Virginia's unique natural, historical, cultural, and public and private assets are leveraged to develop and enhance visitor experiences in an effort to increase economic development through tourism.

#### **Visitor Themes of Product Development**

1. **Town/City Centers** - Refers to the central area of a destination, generally a downtown or main street area
2. **Nature & Outdoor Recreation** - Relaxing and active experiences to enjoy Virginia's scenic natural environment and outdoors, including but not limited to, driving tours, hiking, biking, paddling, boating, fishing, hunting, observing wildlife, and others
3. **History & Heritage** - Experiences, structures, and sites that show Virginia and U.S. history and heritage
4. **Meetings** - Refers primarily to facilities that serve the meetings market such as conventions, conferences, corporate meetings, trade shows, exhibitions, trainings/seminars, and other group events
5. **Sports** - Refers primarily to facilities that host sports events and tournaments, including youth, amateur, collegiate, professional, minor league, and motorsports
6. **Culinary** - Includes wineries, breweries, distilleries, foodie/dining, and agri/aqua-tourism
7. **Arts & Music** - Visual, performance, and craft arts experiences and music of various genres and musical heritage
8. **Industry** - Refers to products that leverage specific industry areas which Virginia has a base; industries include corporate, military, equestrian, and space
9. **Commercial Attractions** - Refers to tourism attractions designed for user entertainment and enjoyment and may not necessarily rely heavily upon inherent destination features. Examples include cruise, higher-end/luxury attractions (golf, spa, resort, and other experiences with upscale elements targeted to an affluent market), family-oriented (theme park), etc.
10. **Events** - May include festivals, fairs, concerts, performances, tournaments/races (running, biking, swimming, kayaking, rowing, boating/sailing, fishing, etc.), and other events. These events serve to further enhance other product themes.

Step Three		Define Surry County's brand while being authentic to the community, the culture, and the people
Step Three, Objective One		Further define the Surry brand points internally so as to help focus on the key points that must be addressed in a branding process
Who:		Surry County Tourism Supporters Group
When:		Completed by December 2013
Step Three, Objective Two		Submit an application for the VTC Marketing Leverage Program (MLP) for funding for a branding study, along with current marketing enhancements
Who:		Surry County Tourism Supporters Group; Surry County Staff; Assistance from VTC in developing application
When:		Application submitted by October 22, 2013
Tactics:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request authorization to proceed with application for VTC MLP grant from Board of Supervisors on September 5</li> <li>• Request VTC MLP grant application approval at Board of Supervisors meeting on October 2</li> <li>• Submit initial draft of VTC MLP grant application by October 8</li> </ul>
Step Three; Objective Three		Identify additional funding sources for possible assistance with Surry County branding
Who:		Surry County Tourism Supporters Group; VTC staff
When:		Work December 2013

	<b>Step Three; Objective Four</b>	Develop Request for Proposals for Surry Branding Process
	<b>Who:</b>	Surry County staff; Surry County Tourism Supporters Group
	<b>When:</b>	February 2014
<b>Step Three Measure</b>	Completion of and adoption of the Surry County, VA tourism brand in Summer 2014; Ongoing use and integration of the brand in future Surry County promotion efforts.	





### **How does Step Three tie into the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan – Promotions?**

The Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan includes recommendations regarding tourism promotions. These promotions efforts included not only the need to communicate the importance of tourism as part of the a community's overall economic strategy, but also to promote Virginia communities to visitors.. The desire of the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group authentically brand Surry County is in alignment with the Virginia Statewide Tourism Plan. In addition to branding, ongoing local stakeholder communication strategies need to be implemented.

#### ***Outcome 4 – Promotions***

Strategic messaging to prospective visitors and industry partners is implemented to increase tourism, economic development, and industry support

#### ***Promotion Objectives***

Tourism promotions are a fundamental function of the industry to attract visitors to destinations and attractions. Similarly, the appeal of Virginia's tourism assets is important to attract tourism economic development. Promotion of the tourism benefits and initiatives are also important to garner support from government leaders and the business community. As such, strategic promotions of the tourism industry should occur on an internal basis, to attract investment, and in approaching key consumer markets.

Objective 1: Efforts to promote and educate government leaders, the business community, and residents on tourism initiatives and benefits are continued

Objective 2: Tourism promotion efforts for economic development are enhanced

Objective 3: Virginia is positioned based on the lures of tourism assets with a strategy to improve connectivity among destinations, attractions, and visitor themes

Objective 4: Visitor markets with high impact continue to be targeted, while new markets are explored

## **NEXT STEPS**

Upon successful adoption of this Surry County Tourism Assessment Report, it is recommended that the Surry County Tourism Supporter Group begin meeting on a regular basis. The Group needs to regularly visit the Report to check on progress, and to keep the direction on track.

As the Report is implemented, it should also be regularly updated with new information, new goals, objectives and measures. As progress warrants, new stakeholders should be identified and brought into the Group's efforts.

As the Group begins implementation, different committees should be formed to focus on the goals identified. These committees may include Branding and Promotions, Infrastructure, Funding, and other committees as needed.

The Surry County Tourism Supporters Group should develop close relationships with other regional tourism initiatives such as the Greater Williamsburg Chamber & Tourism Alliance, and Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance. Such associations can be helpful in developing regional itineraries and marketing programs.

Finally, the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) has numerous programs that can assist Surry County as the tourism initiatives move forward. The programs range from grant funding programs, cooperative advertising, digital marketing programs, and research. It is recommend that the Surry County Tourism Supporters Group schedule an appointment with VTC staff, both at the Richmond office, and also for on-site visits to Surry County. Additional information about Virginia Tourism Corporation programs can be found [www.VATC.org](http://www.VATC.org).



## **Appendix**

### **Definitions:**

**Goal:** Broad statement of measurable outcomes to be achieved on behalf of customers

**Initiatives/Tasks:** Specific programs, strategies, and activities that will help you meet your performance targets

**Measure:** Meaningful indicator that assess progress towards accomplishment of the goal/step and objectives

**Mission Statement:** Statement of purpose; fundamental reason for the tourism effort existence

**Objective:** Statements of what you must do well or barriers that you must overcome to achieve a specific goal/step

**Opportunities:** Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that may have a favorable effect on it

**Strengths:** Resources or capabilities that can be used to accomplish your mission

**Target:** The numerical value of the performance measure you hope to achieve

**Target Market:** Any person, group, or organization that is believed to have an interest in utilizing your tourism related product(s) and/or service(s)

**Threats:** Factors or situations that exist beyond your organization that can negatively affect it

**Tourism Assets:** Any tourism related product, attraction, site, or event that is of interest to target customers/tourists

**Vision Statement:** A word picture of the future that the organization/tourism effort intends ultimately to become or to influence

**Weaknesses:** Deficiencies in resources or capabilities that may hinder your ability to be competitive

## **About the Virginia Tourism Corporation**

The Virginia Tourism Authority, doing business as the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) is an organization of more than 70 professionals working in the Richmond office, in five field offices, and at 11 Welcome Centers throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.



The overriding goal of all of VTC's activities is to "serve the broader interests of the economy of Virginia by supporting, maintaining and expanding the Commonwealth's domestic and international inbound tourism and motion picture production industries in order to increase visitor expenditures, tax revenues and employment."

### ***Goals of the Virginia Tourism Corporation***

#### ***MISSION STATEMENT***

The Virginia Tourism Authority (VTA), doing business as the Virginia Tourism Corporation, serves the broader interests of the economy of Virginia by supporting, maintaining and expanding the Commonwealth's domestic and international travel market and motion picture production, thereby generating increased visitor expenditures, tax revenues and employment. The Corporation develops and implements programs beneficial to Virginia travel-related and motion picture production-related businesses and/or consumers that no industry component or organization would be expected to carry out on its own.

It is the mission of the Authority to bring **More People** (visitors) to the Commonwealth; get them **Staying Longer**; and **Spending More Money**.

#### ***VISION STATEMENT***

To foster a spirit of partnership within Virginia's tourism and motion picture industries to develop and implement innovative and effective programs and initiatives that will grow the industry and increase economic impact and jobs, resulting in a greater tax base for localities and the state.

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